CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for providing electronic communications management capability for managing a unique identity owned by an identity owner, wherein the unique identity is accessible through an associated reference, the method comprising:

providing identity access tools for allowing the identity owner to select a set of authorized identities that have rights to communicate with the identity owner; and

providing device selection tools for allowing the identity owner to select at least one electronic device for reception of communications.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising maintaining a look-up table for locating unique references at the request of a system user.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing preference controls for allowing an identity owner to select default methods for receiving communications.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising allowing the identity owner to select a communication delivery method for a selected group of individuals.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the method comprises allowing the identity owner to select a live communication delivery method.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the method comprises allowing the identity owner to select a message communication delivery method.

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising allowing a message sender to control a sent message until a receiver processes the message, such that a sender may delete a sent message prior to processing.

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8.   The method of claim 4, wherein the method comprises allowing selection of a live communication delivery method for a first group of contacts and a message communication delivery method for a second group of contacts.

9.   The method of claim 8, further comprising allowing the identity owner to block communication delivery from a third group of individuals.

10.   The method of claim 1, further comprising providing the identity owner with a pointer as the associated reference.

11.   The method of claim 10, further comprising using the pointer to reference a plurality of electronic devices accessible to the identity owner.

12.   The method of claim 1, further comprising allowing transmission of communication in a first mode and delivery of the communication in a second mode.

13.   The method of claim 12, further comprising translating the communication from the first mode to the second mode.

14.   The method of claim 12, wherein the first mode and the second mode comprise one of voice communications, text communications, and video communications modes.

15.   A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 1.

16.   A method for facilitating electronic communications management by a system user, the method comprising:

permitting access to a unique identity belonging to the system user through a unique reference, wherein the unique identity comprises a plurality of components;

allowing the system user to alter any one of the identity components without altering the reference; and

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providing the system user with tools for regulating access to the identity components

such that selected known identities have access to selected identity components.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising defining a plurality of electronic

devices as identity components.

18. The method of claim 16, further comprising allowing the system user to select a

communication delivery method for receiving communications from each known system user.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising allowing the system user to select an

additional communication delivery method for unknown system users.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising providing live, message, and blocked

communication delivery options.

21 The method of claim 15, further comprising allowing a sender to select a

communication transmission mode.

22. The method of claim 16, further comprising allowing a first system user to select

a communication transmission mode and allowing a second system user to select a

communication delivery mode.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising translating the communication

transmission mode into the communication delivery mode if required.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising providing video, audio, and text

communication delivery modes and communication transmission modes.

25. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for

performing the method recited in claim 16.

26. A system for allowing a user having a unique identity to manage communications, wherein the unique identity is associated with a plurality of electronic devices, the system comprising:

a service for assigning a reference to a user's unique identity, wherein other identities can access the user's unique identity only by using the reference;

permission controls for allowing the user to control access to the unique identity by restricting authorization to a selected set of other identities; and

preference controls for allowing the user to select at least one associated device from a plurality of associated devices for receiving communication upon an access attempt by an authorized user.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein the service is a centralized service comprising a directory for allowing system users to locate references for other system users.

28. The system of claim 26, wherein the permission controls further comprise tools for restricting a communication delivery method to one of live, message and blocked for each system user.

29. The system of claim 26, wherein the preference controls comprise tools for allowing selection of a communication reception mode and a communication transmission mode, wherein the communication reception and the communication transmission mode comprise at least audio and text modes.

30. The system of claim 29, further comprising translation services for translating from a communication transmission mode to a communication reception mode.

31. The system of claim 26, wherein the plurality of associated devices comprise at least a telephone and a personal computerized device.

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